

Section B-8

Child Care

The contents of this Toolkit have been developed to assist you in your efforts to support family readiness. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is current and accurate. However, because statutory and regulatory changes may have occurred since the publication of this Toolkit, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs cannot assume responsibility for its continued accuracy. Before taking any significant action based on the contents of this Toolkit, you should contact your Family Readiness Program representative or legal officer, as appropriate, to secure the most current information.

Child Care

Child care is a major consideration for Guard and Reserve members as they prepare for training, deployment, and separation from their family. For single parents, child care, and family care plans are inextricably linked because you will need specific legal documents assigning care of your children to a friend or family member.

The importance of planning child care contingencies for your children cannot be understated. Children need safe, healthy, and developmental care. You need to be able to feel that your children are well taken care of during your absence. It is wise to have a detailed child care plan as well as a back up plan. Your relative or child care provider may become sick or have an emergency and a back up plan will make it much easier to solve this problem.

Resources

The Department of Defense (DoD) Child Development Program is the largest employer-sponsored child care program in the country serving children from 6 weeks to 12 years of age in child development centers, family child care homes, and school-age programs. As a Guard or Reserve member, you are eligible to use DoD child development programs while on active duty. However, your children must be registered, and space has to be available. Child Development Centers are generally open from 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, but they have limited space. Family child care is offered by licensed and trained military spouses – generally in military housing. Family child care provides flexible care on nights and weekends. Information about military child development programs may be obtained from all military child development centers or resource and referral offices.

Each state has a child care referral and licensing office that may be able to provide helpful information about child care resources in your area. Both child care centers and family child care homes have licensing and accreditation standards. Look at the standards, ask questions, and seek the most comfortable and caring place for your children.

Helping Children Deal with Separation

The time before you leave for training or deployment can be very stressful. Confronted with a separation from their parent, children may feel a sense of loss of continuity and security, and may not understand why you must leave. Often, young children may internalize these feelings and see themselves as the cause of separation. Talking to your children about leaving and your return is very important. Be truthful and talk honestly and openly about the upcoming separation. Share your concerns, talk about your feelings and their feelings, and let them know that it is normal and okay to be anxious.

Children often have difficulty expressing their feelings and fears in words. Their feelings are sometimes most apparent in their behavior. Spend time with them. Explain what you will be doing. Point out on a map or globe where you will be and plan with your children how you will be communicating with them. If possible, allow your children to be part of your departure – helping you pack your bags, and seeing you off at the airport. Most importantly, parents can help children understand and accept the separation and their feelings about it by planning ahead.

Child care may be one of your most important considerations as a Guard or Reserve member. If your spouse is the main child care provider, it is wise to have a support system of friends, relatives, and others to help take care of the children. Let your children's teachers know about the upcoming separation. Be a part of the solution – plan, plan, plan. Your children are the future.